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ABSTRACT

This paper makes suggestions for adapting training and staff utilization to organizational restructuring, and responsiveness to social needs. The ideal training format for organizational innovation would require selecting, assembling, protecting, and encouraging people, from both within and outside the institution, who are best equipped to initiate, plan for, and evaluate change. Thus, supervisors and decision-makers must be prepared to accept participation in change-design from all ranks of employees, which may include members of indigenous user populations and minority group members. Organizations should be especially alert to the potential contributions of social service user populations whose individuals may function as staff members, paid consultants, or advisors. Motivational framework should incorporate intrinsic rewards that come from individual effectiveness in creatively responding to social needs. The university could serve as a catalyst for this type of change-design by setting up model training programs and developing ways of overcoming status, social class and rank differentials which can either inhibit or enhance creativity and innovation. (KG)

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HELPING INSTITUTIONS RESPOND TO CHANGE NEEDS THROUGH TRAINING*

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These remarks are prompted in part by training experiences with the Minnesota State Employment Service (recently re-named the Minnesota State Manpower Services Department) and similar experiences with other human-service organizations. Such experiences have led me to address myself to broad concerns of helping institutions respond to change needs through training.

My early professional experience in industry and in government led me to regard training as a need-based staff activity, rather narrowly designed to develop employee competence on present or anticipated tasks or jobs. Thus described, in-service training became a conceptually simple, if sometimes arduous, undertaking. Jobs and tasks were defined and described, present employees' performance, skills and abilities were measured or assessed, and the difference between the two constituted the need for training. Given those specific training needs, training specialists then drew from a variety of training techniques or stimuli to learning in order to structure a carefully-controlled learning experience designed to produce the desired employee competence. After training, one measured or observed employee performance and compared it to pre-training performance to ascertain the effectiveness of training. There were then, as now, vexing problems of trainee motivation to learn and difficulties with transferring the learned behavior to job situations which were sometimes hostile to the newly-acquired behavior, especiall when that behavior involved changed attitudes and human relations skills.

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These problems seem hardly worth mentioning when contrasted with today's critical needs for adaptive staff behavior, especially in those institutions intended to serve people, such as manpower agencies, welfare departments, law enforcement agencies, housing authorities, health care organizations, and

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schools. The massive indictment of our institutions continues to roll in as the painful awareness and re-assessment of national needs and priorities continues. Many people who are employees of these institutions are terrified by the calls for change, and often they erroneously equate such pressures with subversion or planned violent revolution. The magnitude of the gap between institutional performance and social needs appears to them to be overwhelming, and many simply "cop out" by retreating to the relative tranquillity of the suburbs where they make extensive use of the dual anesthesia of alcohol and Andy Griffith.

What is happening to our institutions, I think, is part of a series of gigantic convulsions which are gripping our country - I like to think of them as labor pains in the birth of an entirely new society. Despite the inexcusable deprivations and opportunity disadvantages which exist for many of our people, we are moving toward a society more nearly equal than ever before, and we simply do not know how to live with it. Interpersonal relations of mutual respect do not have a long history or tradition in this world, but they can be learned. A man whose identity is founded upon his concept of self as a person at a certain point in the occupational hierarchy, for example, may have great difficulty in thinking of someone from a lower job status as an equal. Yet effective institutional performance when social change is preeminent demands inputs and contributions from persons along the entire occupational spectrum within an organization, and, in my observation, these persons frequently share responsibilities and concern for making the institution work which are relatively equal in nature. Too often, what gets in the way is traditional organization structure undergirded as it is by power and status considerations. Status differentials between men and women, Blacks and Whites, old and young, educated and uneducated, Indians and Blacks, professional and nonprofessional, managerial and non-managerial, and so on, serve too often to inhibit contributions and to restrain institutions from levels of performance which would more nearly meet the challenges. To learn how to approach common problems as equals, we must find ways to communicate effectively (and that usually means learning how to listen), and we must master techniques of considering the consequences of alternative courses of action (in terms of advantages and disadvantages) before exercising the freedom to act that belongs to equals.

I do not think that our institutions are inherently incapable of meeting

the challenge, and I am optimistic that we will learn that violent responses to conflict and adaptive stresses produce no lasting solutions. We are learning, I think, that the old ways of influencing our children and others - punishment, inducing anxiety, coercion, and use of the power advantage - no longer work, and the result is a sudden bankruptcy of society and its institutions which depend upon precisely these influence techniques to get things done. Loss of the traditional means of controlling and motivating people means that we must now depend upon inner motivation to accomplish social goals, and the implications for training are obvious and enormous!

If institutional and social survival is to be safeguarded through cultivating institutional change - and I believe that is what must happen - then a new kind of training is needed to complement the older, and more narrow, approach, and the format of this new kind of training will be especially crucial. That training format must enable the people who are best able to design, implement, and evaluate institutional change to function in such a way that they can learn how to innovate successfully. This kind of training is never completed, never finished, because each need for change in the organization demands new designs for change and new combinations of people from inside and outside the institution to work together to implement change. Training format for organizational innovation requires selecting, assembling, protecting, and "sparking" a group of people best able to initiate organizational change from the entire spectrum of the organization and from such outside sources as related institutions and user populations. For social service institutions, the results may often be the creation of new, external structures, much as industrial firms create subsidiaries.

Some suggestions for trainers who will find themselves faced with the need to bring about this new kind of training include the following:

1. All supervisors and especially the top decision-makers in the institution need to be prepared for the eventuality that employees from all ranks of the organization may be asked to participate in the process of change-design as relative equals. Supervisors may have to help by "freeing up" subordinates in a psychological as well as a scheduling or a job description sense, so that innovative contributions can be released.

2. A broader problem may be the necessity to take a new look at the reward and motivational framework of the organization so that innovative thinking and behavior can be enhanced. Necessary changes will be difficult. The perversion by ordinary institutional life of the joyous experience of discovery and success into urbane greed for the symbols of success such as money and social status is the colossal human tragedy of contemporary organization experience. The usually untapped motivational gains from knowing that one's organization and one's efforts are responsive to community needs and are effective in a human sense may be huge. Arrangement of a means for feed-back of change results in the training format is therefore crucial.
3. The trainer will have to learn to avoid choosing participants in the change design, implementation, and evaluation process simply on the basis of their specialization or organizational rank. He will have to learn to be alert to the selection of persons at the lowest operating and observation points of the organization as well as indigenous members of user populations, members of different social classes, and other appropriate persons from outside the organization.
4. Related to this last point is the suggestion that the organization be made <u>hospitable</u> to outsiders, especially members of user populations. Such persons may become staff members, they may function as paid consultants, or they may simply serve in an advisory capacity. When low-income and ethnic representatives are employed, there may be problems or retention, but, in my observation, there may also be the chance of finding some incredibly talented people who have simply never had the opportunity to make the excellent contribution they are capable of making.
5. Because there are vast problems of overcoming status, social class, and power differentials and because these problems are part of the group dynamics which either inhibit or liberate creativity and innovation, the university can serve a useful role by functioning as an "outside" catalyst and even as "trainer" in this new training process. To gain from serving in such a role, the university should develop ways of learning more about the change process within institutions so that it can change its own institutional life by

being better able to prepare professionals-in-training for the changes they will experience in their future organization lives.

6. One way to secure insights into the effectiveness of newly-changed methods of serving user populations is to create advisory bodies drawn from those populations. One group in Minnesota which is characteristically difficult to serve is the American Indian population. Recently, advisory committees drawn from the Indian community have been formed to assist the Minneapolis Department of Public Relief, the Minneapolis Police Department, the Minneapolis Workhouse, the Minneapolis Public Schools, and the State Corrections Department. These committees fulfill the dual function of assisting the agencies to devise new ways of dealing with Indians and of spreading the word within the Indian community as to the mission and operation of each agency.
7. The end result of training format designed to produce useful institutional change may be significant structural change in the organization but the key to effective training format is the <u>ability</u> to structure, when necessary, working groups of change agents who have the capacity and the motivation to help the institution do its job in the face of changing social circumstances.

In essence, the new training must reflect a changing basis of motivation, and it must facilitate the spirit of openness and adaptability so vital to effective institutional change.